

# Pat Croce

## Pirate historian plants his flag in St. Augustine

The über entrepreneur's investment in his passion for pirates is paying off

Pat Croce is a self-proclaimed "guy off the street corner" turned serial entrepreneur. Croce started his career as a physical therapist pounding his positive attitude and hardcore work ethic into the athletes of the Philadelphia Flyers and the Philadelphia 76ers in the early 1980s.

Fast forward thirty years. His long list of accomplishments include being president of the 76ers and authoring 12 books, including the *New York Times* best seller, "I Feel Great and You Will Too" as well as seven books about pirates. He is a much sought after motivational speaker. He owns six restaurants in Key West and three miniature golf courses on the Jersey Shore.

Pat Croce inside the St. Augustine Pirate and Treasure Museum.

Written by Christi Elflein  
Photography by Michael LeGrand  
and Christi Elflein



Watch Pat Croce's lively interview at MagLab! Turn to this page in the digital edition to hear the motivational speaker talk about what spurred him to invest in St. Augustine.





CELEBRATE 450 YEARS

ST AUGUSTINE

"History is so important, why not market history?  
It's educational and entertaining."

— Pat Croce



Recognizing the importance of St. Augustine as the nation's oldest city, Croce created the Colonial Quarter to give visitors the chance to experience life during different centuries.

Croce's latest endeavors and passion for pirates have brought him to St. Augustine. His fascination with pirates began when he was a kid and saw the movie *Captain Blood*. "I would carve the skull and crossbones into my ruler at school, and then the nuns would hit me with it," says Croce.

He heeded his own advice, "take action on your passion," and he went after pirates. He began researching, writing and collecting all things pirate, and he opened a pirate museum in Key West in 2004.

He became enamored with St. Augustine while visiting in 2009. He was there for a speaking engagement, and recognized that the history of the region, ripe with pirate lore, would make the perfect place for him to house his pirate artifact collection. After he wrapped up his business for the day, he spontaneously bought the building on the corner of Castillo Drive and Fort Alley.

"Here is where Sir Francis Drake and Robert Searles plundered," says Croce. "Real pirates walked this land." He moved his pirate museum from Key West, and in 2010 opened the St. Augustine Pirate and Treasure Museum.

What began as a childhood obsession is now a thriving enterprise. A visit to the St. Augustine Pirate and Treasure Museum is evidence to Croce's lifelong admiration of pirates. The museum feels and smells like





The St. Augustine Pirate and Treasure Museum houses Croce's personal pirate artifact collection.

you are on a pirate ship sailing the seas 300 years ago during the Golden Age of Piracy. There are roughly 800 rare artifacts, including an authentic Jolly Roger flag, the world's only pirate treasure chest and real gold doubloons.

The attraction even boasts a 3-D sound effects show created by Disney Imagineers that takes you back to the 1700s, below the deck of a ship with the infamous Blackbeard. "You'll swear a sword is going across your neck," says Croce.

Next door is the 2.5-acre Colonial Quarter, which he opened in 2012. Croce partnered with the University of Florida to create this \$3.5 million authentic living history museum. It is an immersive experience into four eras of St. Augustine's history.

Croce says, "Think Colonial Williamsburg meets EPCOT, but instead of countries, we have centuries."

A tour guide transports you to the time of Pedro Menendez in the 16th century. Then you can fire a musket and climb a 17th century watchtower. Next, venture into a fort soldier's home in the 18th century. While finally ending your tour with a beer at the Rose & Crown Public House in the 18th century British "14th colony."

"Heritage tours are a value proposition that not everyone can offer," says Croce. "St. Augustine is the first city!" He sees it as a unique opportunity. "History is so important," Croce adds. "Why not market history? It's educational and entertaining." 🦋



**PARADISE KEY**

**SOUTH BEACH**



Location of the 2013 **SMARTHOME**

paradisekeysouthbeach.com | 904.222.8686  
3611 Paradise Way | Jacksonville Beach, FL  
The corner of South Beach Parkway and Jacksonville Drive





13748 Atlantic Blvd Jacksonville, FL (904) 221-0793

[www.atlanticcoastmarine.com](http://www.atlanticcoastmarine.com)



*Selling family fun since 1995*



